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Welcome

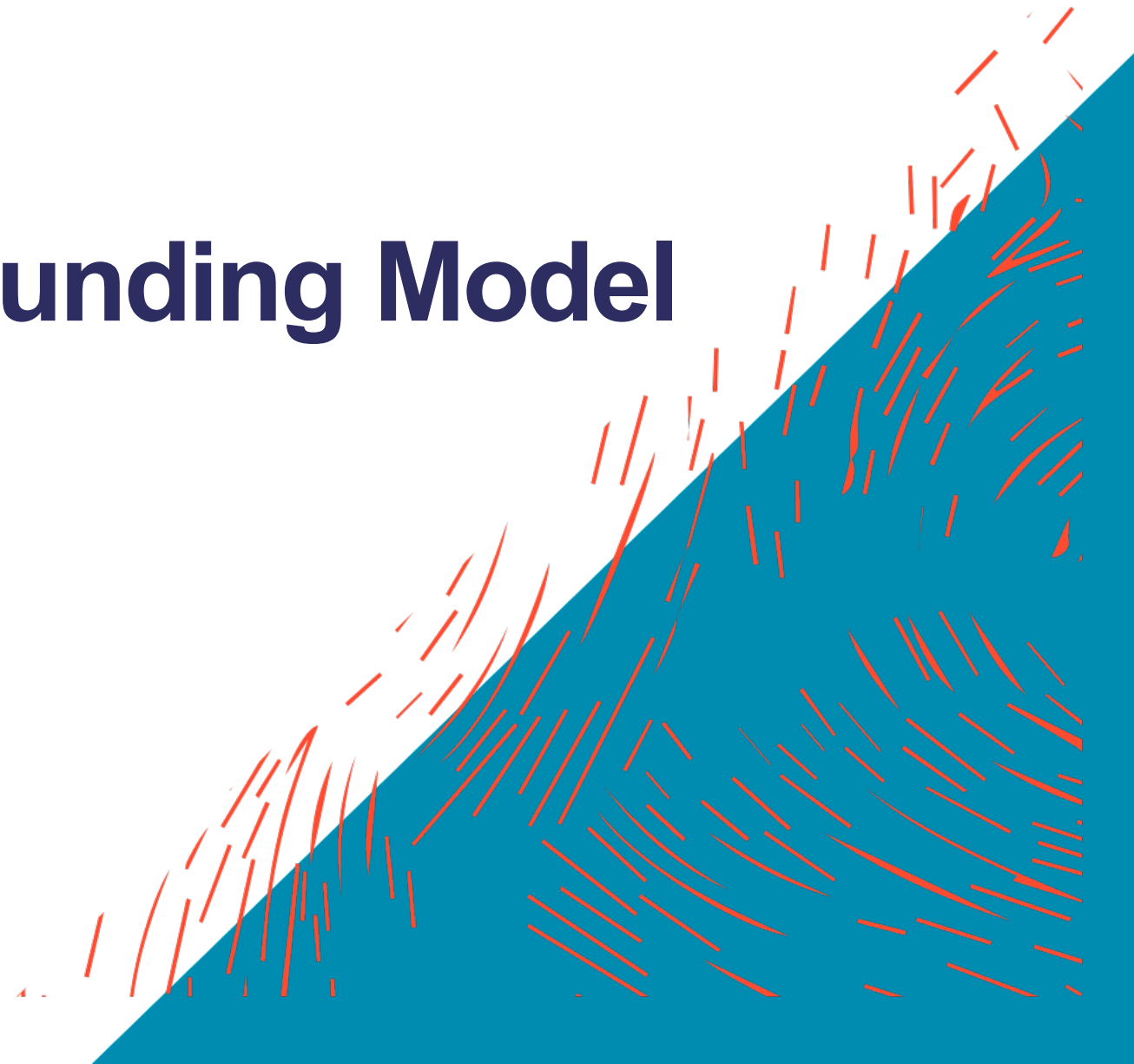




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MRC New Unit Funding Model

Community Webinar
11th October 2022



Background

- The MRC Unit and Centre Portfolio review confirmed the need for a more strategic approach to long-term investments, overseen by a new Major Investments Board
- New unit funding model will combine the best aspects from existing MRC unit and centre formats to provide a funding model that:
 - supports bold, interdisciplinary science to capitalise on a scientific opportunity or an emerging challenge to ensure the UK achieves a world-leading position
 - has a simpler, transparent and consistent costing model
 - is more amenable to partnership with other Councils or funders and has the potential to be implemented more widely within UKRI
 - reduces the burden of review and administrative bureaucracy, simplifying and streamlining the existing QQR process
 - is simpler to operate for the host Research Organisation

Key Features

- A mission to address a specific goal or challenge where disruptive and/or interdisciplinary approaches are required
- A 14 year (7+7) investment which provides distinctiveness in the research landscape
- Typical budget of ~£3m per annum over 7 years
- To be outward facing and provide a stimulating training environment and a positive, diverse, and responsible research culture
- To be led by an empowered director, as part of a leadership team, with control of the core budget, the research strategy and appointments required to meet the agreed set of objectives
- Can hosted by a single eligible organisation or a partnership of organisations
- Likely to be administered through Grant Terms and Conditions
- Budget to be provided as a grant to the lead Research Organisation, under the 80% FEC model
- Core award to lever existing grants, with growth / sustainability to be achieved through competitive grants and fellowships

Major Investments Board

A new [Major Investments Board](#) has been established to

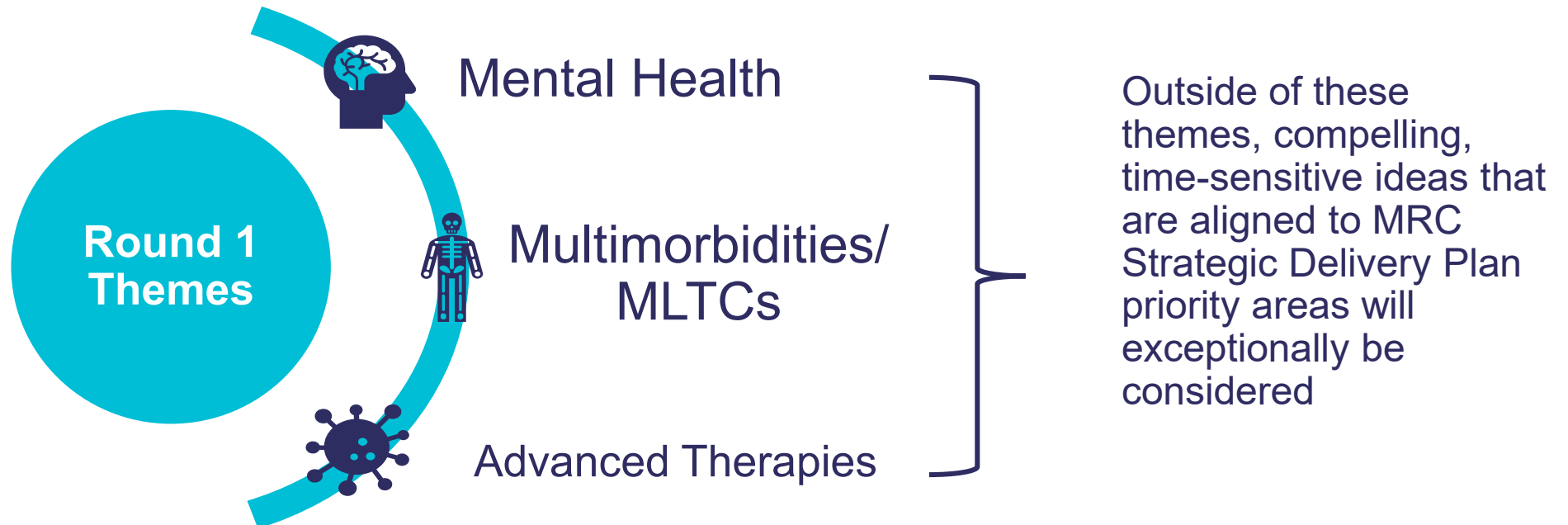
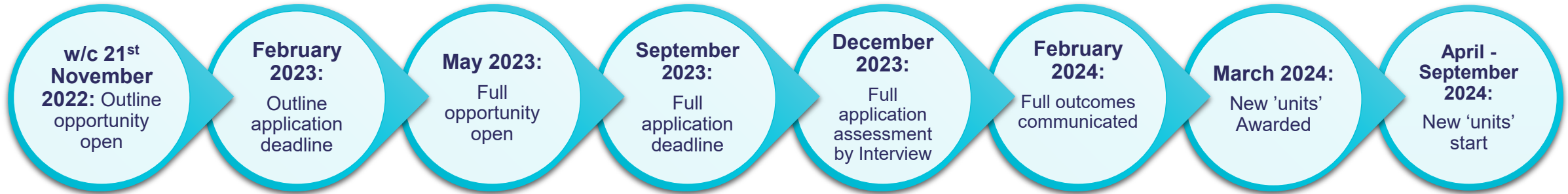
- provide oversight and funding for MRC's major investment portfolio (Institute, Unit & Centres, and other large national investments), including the 'New Unit' scheme
- horizon scan and identify areas of opportunity for new strategic investments, whether through MRC alone or in partnership
- consider networking and outreach opportunities to maximize the value and impact of MRC strategic investments

Membership

- 14 members including the 5 MRC Board chairs, MRC council members and independent expertise
- Chairperson: MRC Executive Chair

Round 1 Themes and Timeline

The timeline and themes for Round 1 have been established:



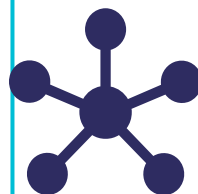
Research Challenges

- These strategic investments will support bold and ambitious research focused on a **defined challenge**
- Tackling such challenges will be transformational to biomedical and/or health research and will enhance approaches to the prevention, early detection, diagnosis, and treatment of disease, improving health and wellbeing for all
- They will be beacons of excellence in research culture and equality, diversity, and inclusion

These strategic investments will...



Be bold, ambitious and innovative, and address an urgent knowledge gap which is not already being adequately addressed elsewhere



Address a substantial unmet need, best pursued through coordinated and flexible, major long-term funding



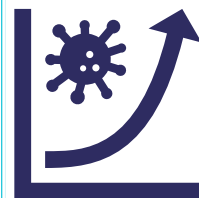
Have specific goals achievable within the 14-year timeframe which will be transformational for a research field or area of health research



Foster innovation and establishing the capacity and capability to place the UK at the forefront of the future of health research



Bring together creativity and new approaches through integrated and cross-disciplinary working



Drive breakthrough advances and addresses specific bottlenecks through knowledge generation, technological or methodological innovation with clear translational relevance

Who can apply?

Principle applicants

- must be employed by an eligible organisation
- have the expertise and experience to lead a Unit and its culture

Whilst international organisations cannot lead on an application, it is possible where appropriate for an international collaborator to be part of the leadership team. They are expected to offer expertise and/or facilities not available in the UK and to provide clear indicators of commitment

We expect the research and management teams to be diverse in terms of expertise and also inclusion of those at different career stages and with protected characteristics

Partnerships

- Applications can be from a single eligible organisation or a partnership of organisations. When applying as a partnership, it must explained how the partnership will be managed successfully
- MRC will provide all funding to the lead organisation, who will manage the partnership and distribution of funds

Research Organisation Support

- Considerable and clearly defined support from the Research Organisation(s) is essential for a successful application and will be part of the assessment, e.g.
 - The provision and maintenance of lab space
 - Access to existing facilities
 - HR services
 - Underpinning of key staff positions
- As part of the application process, a letter of support will need to be provided by a person with oversight of the organisations research strategy, ie. VC / VP research or equivalent
- Organisations are encouraged to prioritise their involvement in applications and to realistically restrict the number submitted

Funding model

- The budget will be provided as a grant to the host Research Organisation, under the 80% FEC model
- The model is designed to be readily partnered across UKRI, with the benefit of providing administrative simplicity for the host organisation
- The core award should lever existing grants at the point of establishment, and provide a platform to win additional grant support, with growth and ultimate sustainability to be achieved through competitive grant and fellowship mechanisms
- A minimum of 100% leverage on core investment by the mid-term point (year 7) would be expected

Financial support (1)

A typical core award:

- will support a limited number of inter-linked research themes and/or capabilities and platforms
- will be focussed on key objectives, achievable during the 14-year lifespan, rather than operating as traditional individual investigator-led programmes
- long-term research agendas may incorporate several investigators, who might move in and out of the research themes over the lifespan of the award
- Investigators' wider research to be supported through their own portfolio of grant funding
- core funding might support the recruitment of new investigators critical for the delivery of the research themes (e.g. international or discipline hopping), where 100% support might be needed for the first 2-3 years before grant funding is established

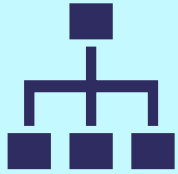
Financial support (2)

A typical core award will support:

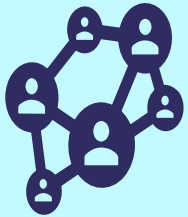
- a flexible fund to pump-prime activities/support new opportunities
- technology and data platforms to provide accessible facilities and capability essential to the mission and to promote open-science
- mid-range or large equipment necessary to establish essential platforms or facilities
- external stakeholder activities including public engagement and involvement

Over 14 years this equates to a full economic cost of up to £52.5m and approximately £25m for the first 7 years. We will fund 80% of the full economic costs

Training and Careers



These investments are expected to build research capacity in their specialist area. We are looking for a training environment that will equip researchers with the tools needed to carry out world leading research and effectively transition between career stages.



Applicants should consider how they will use the security offered by this long-term funding to address training needs specific to the challenge. This should include the provision of meaningful support and recognition for interdisciplinary research and for the range of people, skills and career pathways required to deliver an innovative training agenda.



This funding may be used for training and capacity building when it is required to address the research challenge, and where that cannot be addressed through conventional/existing training and career-focussed funding routes e.g. existing doctoral training programmes, fellowship schemes.

Research Culture

New MRC units will adopt the highest standards in the way research is conducted and openly communicated and develop and nurture career paths and a training environment which supports a positive research culture.

The MRC/UKRI policies, as well as cross sector concordats and joint statements, emphasise three key principles which underpin a positive research culture:



Research is communicated to maximise impact, built on transparency and openness, and partnership with the public

Career paths, and training environment, are provided to recognise a diversity of talents, skills, and outputs, and embrace team science as the way of working.



Research is conducted with integrity, centred on reproducibility, responsible innovation, collaboration, interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary

Environmental Sustainability

- MRC strategic investments are expected to consider and promote environmental sustainability in their research practices. Successful awards will have an explicit environmental sustainability strategy which aligns with the host Research Organisation(s) sustainability plan and policies.
- In the first instance awards should aim to comply with the [Greening Government commitments 2021-2025](#)
- The host organisation(s) / new unit will be required to report to UKRI or MRC on the progress of these activities.

Monitoring and Reviews

- Peer review of the application for funding will be simplified and shortened, with national/international experts to assess the bid as a whole
- New 'units' will have an international Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) to provide challenge and oversight of scientific progress
- A progress review at year 6 would determine the case for second term renewal
- In the event of failure at the mid-term review, close-down will be managed over a 2 year sun-setting period
- There will be some annual assurance reporting e.g. operational delivery, governance and risk management

Round 1 Assessment

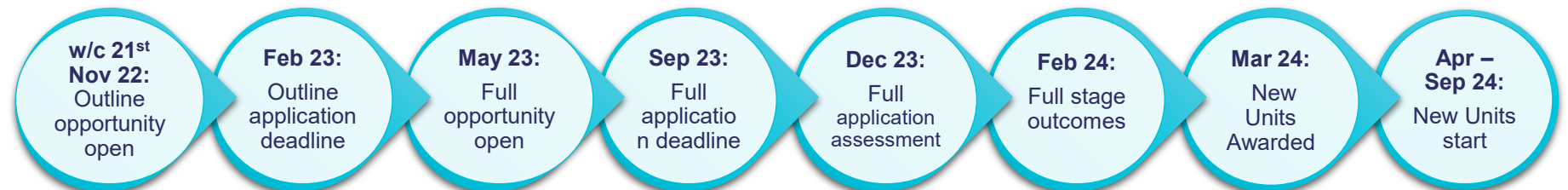
Aiming to generate bold ideas that do things differently to tackle challenges

Outline application:

- Articulation of the challenge, strategic support from Research Organisations, potential of the leadership team
- Short case for support, use of resume for research & innovation (R4RI)
- Assessed by MIB supplemented with college drawn from MRC Boards & Panels and international experts

Full application

- International peer review
- Specially convened panel chaired by MIB member with cross-over from outline stage
- Applicant interviews





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Questions?



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Thank you



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